REMARKS

Claims 1-3, 6-30, 33-37, 39-43, 46-70, 73-75 and 77-82 are pending in the instant application. Claims 2-3, 16-24, 26-30, 33-35, 42-43, 56-64, 66-70 and 73-75 have been withdrawn. Claims 1, 6-15, 25, 36-37, 39-41, 46-55, 65 and 77-82 have been rejected by the Examiner. Claims 1, 25, 36, 41, and 65 have been amended. Support for these amendments may be found throughout the Specification, and in particular, on pages 8 and 9. No new matter has been added by the amendments. The Applicants submit that claims 1, 6-15, 25, 36-37, 39-41, 46-55, 65 and 77-82 are in condition for allowance and request reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejections.

Claim Rejections Under 35 USC § 112

Claims 1, 6-15, 25, 36-37, 39-41, 46-55, 65, and 77-82 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being allegedly indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

The feature "said activity selected", in line 8 of Claim 1, lines 12-13 of Claim 25, lines 17-18 of Claim 36, line 10 of Claim 41, and lines 13-14 of Claim 65, has been amended to recite "said request". The Examiner indicates on page 3, paragraph 4 of the Office Action that "Claim 1 recites the limitation 'said activity options' in the last line." The Examiner states that there is insufficient antecedent basis for this feature. The Applicants respectfully submit that this feature was amended in a prior action (see Request for Continued Examination and Amendment filed on July 5, 2005) to remove "the" preceding "activity options." Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully submit that Claim 1 (as well as independent claims 25, 41, and 65) has sufficient antecedent basis. Reconsideration and removal of the rejections is respectfully requested.

Claim Rejections Under 35 USC §103

Claims 1, 6-15, 25, 36-37, 39-41, 46-55, 65, and 77-82 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable over McFarland, U.S. Patent No. 6,154,753 (hereinafter "McFarland") in view of Bons et al., "A Formal Specification of Automated Auditing of Trustworthy Trade Procedures for Open Electronic Commerce" (hereinafter "Bons"). The Applicants respectfully traverse the rejections.

For an obviousness rejection to be proper, the Examiner must meet the burden of establishing that all elements of the invention are disclosed in the prior art; and that the prior art

relied upon, coupled with knowledge generally available in the art at the time of the invention, must contain some suggestion or incentive that would have motivated the skilled artisan to modify a reference or combined references. *In re Fine*, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d 1596, 1598 (Fed. Cir. 1988); *In Re Wilson*, 165 U.S.P.Q. 494, 496 (C.C.P.A. 1970). McFarland in view of Bons however, does not teach or make obvious all elements of Claims 1, 25, 36, 41, and 65, respectively.

Claim 1 has been amended in a non-narrowing manner to better clarify that which the Applicants regard to be the invention. Claim 1 recites a method for facilitating supplier auditing functions in a communications network environment, comprising: "receiving a request from a user system of an enterprise system to initiate an activity, said activity including scheduling an audit for performing an initial or ongoing qualification of an existing or prospective trading partner of the enterprise system; *assigning an access level to a requester at the user system with respect to at least one database*; said enterprise system retrieving data from at least one database, said data corresponding to said request; and *transmitting said data to said user system based upon the access level*; wherein said scheduling said audit includes: entering supplier data relating to the trading partner into a schedule form; *entering requester information into said schedule form*; selecting an auditor to perform said audit; entering a purpose for said audit; entering a time frame for performing said audit; and distributing a completed schedule form to at least one entity; wherein further said enterprise system includes a quality information network application for executing activity options that include the activity requested by the user system."

No new matter has been entered via these amendments. Support for the added features "assigning an access level to a requester at the user system with respect to at least one database" and "transmitting said data to said user system based upon the access level" may be found, for example, on pages 8-9 of the Specification, which states in part, "A variety of user types may utilize the quality information network tool [which] help define the nature and extent of access to data provided by organization 102" (page 8, lines 15-18). Also, the users include divisional users, suppliers/contractors, executive readers, and administrators (see generally, Specification, pages 8 and 9). "Administrators of organization 102 determine the access requirements for internal and external users of the quality information tool and maintain access control lists [which] store the names of authorized users of the databases stored in data storage device 118 and each user is assigned an access level by an administrator of organization 102" (Specification,

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page 9 lines 26-29).

Col. 24, lines 24-30 of McFarland teach a form whereby scheduling of internal or external auditors, audit date, scope of audit, departmental management identification, noncompliance counts, observation counts, audit type, documents to collect for review, checklists to generate, and corrective actions to validate are planned and documented. The information entered in that form is *entirely directed to auditing information, rather than the requester information or the operator information*. Further, Col. 26, lines 26-29 of McFarland teaches that in fields "employee, manager" at 636, and fields "iaext" and "mgrext" at blocks 638 and 640, the operator must enter the data relating to the identity of the auditor and the internal auditors phone, as well as the managers telephone. *There is no disclosure in McFarland that the operator enters the information about the operator*. Thus, McFarland fails to teach or suggest the element "entering requester information into said schedule form", as recited in Claim 1.

McFarland also fails to teach or suggest the elements "assigning an access level to a requester...with respect to at least one database", and "transmitting said data to said user system based upon the access level" as recited in Applicants' Claim 1. Bons does not cure the deficiencies of McFarland at least for the reason that it fails to teach or suggest the elements "entering requester information into said schedule form" and "assigning an access level to a requester...with respect to at least one database," as recited in Applicants' claim 1. Therefore, McFarland in view of Bons does not render Claim 1 obvious.

Since they contain similar features, Claims 25, 36, 41, and 65 are patentable over McFarland in view of Bons for at least the reasons given for Claim 1. Claims 6-15 depend from Claim 1, Claims 37 and 39-40 depend from Claim 31, Claims 46-55 depend from Claim 41, and Claims 77-82 depend from Claim 65. These dependent claims are believed to be allowable at least due to their dependencies on independent claims 1, 31, 41 and 65, respectively.

CONCLUSION

No new matter has been entered and no additional fees are believed to be required. However, if any fees are due with respect to this Amendment, please charge them to Deposit Account No. 50-0150.

Respectfully submitted,

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